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ABSTRACT

Senators of the Eighty-third Congress were studied to ascertain what factors were most highly correlated with press coverage for each individual senator. This information was then correlated with an earlier study of the Eighty-ninth, Ninety-first, and Ninety-third Congresses to see what differences might exist which could indicate the development of a "new breed" of publicity-minded senators commanding a power base through national constituencies created by media coverage. Few differences were found between the earlier study of the more recent Congresses and the study of the Eighty-third Congress. While senators with a high institutional opportunity (a combination of seniority, prestigious committee leadership assignments, and state size) have an advantage over less powerful colleagues which shows up more in the Eighty-third Congress than in the later ones, nevertheless, senate activity (measured by number of Congressional Record entries and bills and resolutions sponsored) is a more powerful predictor of press coverage than institutional opportunity in all four Congresses. Senators with power bases created in part by media coverage are not a recent phenomenon and are at least as evident in the Eighty-third Congress as in the Ninety-third Congress. (TJ)

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U. S. Senatorial News Coverage from 1953 to 1975

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ABSTRACT

Content analysis of the Associated Press national trunk wire is used to investigate the relative importance of institutional opportunity structure (seniority, state size and committee leadership prestige) and senatorial activity on the amount of wire service coverage received by senators in the 83rd Congress (1953-54). The findings from this study are compared to those of earlier studies of the 89th, 91st and 93rd Congresses by the same authors. This study and the earlier ones rely primarily on unobtrusive data to test some of the observations of political scientists such as Polsby, Ripley, Rieselbach, and Matthews.

The findings suggest that senators who enjoy prominent positions of power through seniority, prestigious committee leadership assignments and large state size--what we call institutional opportunity structure-- appear to have an advantage in the wire service coverage over their less powerful colleagues in the 83rd Congress. In fact, the importance of opportunity structure is greater in the 83rd Congress than for the three later Congresses (89th, 91st, and 93rd).

Senate activity--as measured by the amount of activity in the Congressional Record and by the number of bills and resolutions sponsored--still is a more powerful predictor of wire service coverage in the 83rd Congress than is opportunity structure, a pattern borne out in all four Congresses studied. Positions of power in the U.S. Senate obviously help pave the way for attention in the press, but it is clear from these data that an active senator with few of the trappings of Senate power can also command considerable press coverage.

These findings suggest that no major changes have occurred in the patterns of frequency of press coverage of the U.S. Senate during the last quarter-century. The institutional sources of Senate power suggested by Matthews and others have been consistently important in press visibility, but the forces of events and individual senatorial activity are more powerful in predicting amount of press coverage. The "new breed" of publicity-minded senators--whom Polsby sees as commanding a power base through national constituencies created in part by media coverage--appears to be no recent phenomenon.

Presented to the Theory & Methodology Division, Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Seattle, Washington, August 1978.

Dramatic growth in the power of the executive branch in the American political system during the last several decades has led to much concern about the communication problems of the legislative branch. Many legislators and other analysts see press coverage of Congress as "occasional, haphazard, and unbalanced."[1] They argue that such unsystematic public information -- in contrast to more direct and thorough media concentration on the executive branch -- contributes to widespread ignorance about the workings of Congress and to sagging credibility in the eyes of constituents.[2]

These problems of communication were among the major concerns of the recent U.S. Commission on the Operation of the Senate. A major recommendation of the Commission was that the U.S. Senate should organize its public communication into a central staff responsibility, coordinating the information efforts of senators and committees working on priority issues, arranging news conferences regularly, and establishing a press briefing room under Senate control.[3]

In contrast, some scholars see the Senate as having taken much greater advantage of mass media coverage than has the House of Representatives or the judicial branch. Polsby argues that the development of extensive national press coverage in recent decades appears to have had a profound effect on the Senate.

He says the national media, in part, permit a new breed of senators to build a national constituency, contributing greatly to a decentralized power structure in the Senate.[4] Robinson finds that network television covers the Senate much more frequently than it reports House activity, conferring both stature and Presidential potential on Senators.[5]

Blanchard's study of Congressional correspondents found reporters agreeing that the Senate was given greater press attention than the House. Concluding that media preoccupation with the Senate was not necessarily undesirable, Blanchard[6] agreed with Polsby that the patterns of national press coverage of the Senate are consistent with the emergence of the Senate as a "great forum, an echo chamber, a publicity machine."[7] Polsby sees the Senate-press relationship as functioning to incubate policy innovations through "great debates" and the "hidden hand of self-promotion" of individual senators.[8]

These arguments point to the need for a firmer idea of the actual patterns of Senate news coverage. What factors determine which senators are visible and which suffer relative media obscurity?

The present research uses natural data, primarily, to study post-World War II patterns of Senate news in major media of regional and national stature. The central questions guiding the work are these: To what extent do the institutional-structural aspects of the Senate -- such as seniority, committee assignment, and senatorial staff size -- affect the news potential

of individual senators? Do institutional factors create an opportunity structure from which certain senators may gain greater publicity for their activities than their less fortunate colleagues? Or, do journalists, as they often claim, merely seek out those senators who are active or who have something important to say, without regard to their institutional position within the Senate?

Theoretical Perspective: Senate Institutional Forces and Journalistic Values

Much of the classic work on Congress, especially Matthews' widely quoted research on the Senate,[9] emphasized the formal and informal institutional aspects of the federal legislature -- seniority, committee structure, norms, and folkways -- in explaining legislative organization and behavior. The more recent work on Congress places a much greater emphasis upon the conscious, goal-directed strategies of individual Congressmen, and less upon behavior which is in some way shaped by unwritten norms, role expectations, or institutionalized behavior patterns. Polsby, for example, argues forcefully that the evidence of an inner-club of a conformist, powerful controlling group of senators is slim, and that power is much more diffuse than an inner club argument would suggest. At least, he says, the negative powers to stall, amend, alter, or block legislation are widely dispersed, and that Senate division of labor tends to be ad hoc. Senators are just as likely to assume roles that fit their individual self-interests as to accept roles

dictated by institutional forces beyond their control.[10]

Other analyses of power in the Senate seem to support Polsby's view. Ripley found Senate power to be diffuse, with individual senators having substantial bargaining leverage relative to party leaders.[11] Rieselbach also argues that Congress is decentralized, with power shared widely, but existing in "multiple centers of influence" not equally accessible to all senators.[12]

To what extent is the dispersion of authority in the Senate reflected in the mass media? Is press coverage dominated by the Senate shift toward decentralization of power -- with individual senators cultivating a national constituency for "independent advocacy" through media publicity[13] -- or do institutional-structural factors of Senate organization prevail in Senate news?

The norms, values, constraints on the roughly 300 journalists regularly reporting on Congress[14] obviously have some effect on Senate news, but how much? Some scholars, such as Breed and Matejko, assume a group normative view of news work. They argue that the news is primarily a product of normative constraints emerging from within journalistic organizations.[15] Others see external institutions as the major influences of news.

Hall[16], Epstein[17], Molotch and Lester[18], and Schiller[19] argue that news is manipulated by political and economic forces external to the media. They see journalistic norms as

inferences about society which are couched in a political consensus managed by institutions outside journalism. Epstein[20], for example, argues that journalists must rely heavily on outside institutions and experts for evaluation of "truth" because they are so poorly equipped to validate what is news themselves. Sigal's study of Washington news tends to support Epstein's view.[21]

In their review of the research on news structure, Davison, Boylan, and Yu[22] conclude that both forces from the external social-political environment and from within journalistic institutions shape the news. Galtung and Ruge[23] found that issues involving powerful elites were important in the initial news selection stages but that an event also had to be timely and contain news values of conflict, violence, or negativity to become and remain news.[24]

Reporters who spend most of their time in Congress appear to see their role as adversarial. A majority of those responding to Robert Blanchard's mail survey agreed that they were "watchdogs" against wrongdoing, determiners of the "veracity" of legislators' public utterances, prodders through their writing to get Congressmen to serve the public interest, and stimulants to "stir things up by asking questions."[25]

Few would doubt that the Congressional reporters' perceived role is valid some of the time, especially in the post-Watergate investigative mentality of much of the press.[26] But some research suggests the reporters' view of themselves is

hardly the full story.

Miller's dissertation research on reporters in Congress -- consisting of extensive interviews with reporters, legislators, and committee and personal legislative staffs -- suggests they are just as often collaborators in the news as they are adversaries. In accepting and providing tips and leads, in willingness to float "trial balloons" and accept leaks, and in various arrangements of quid pro quo, reporters and Congressmen are often tacit, if not intentional, partners in the news.[27]

Matthews' earlier work on the Senate suggested much the same thing. He found reporters and senators engaged in an open exchange: "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."[28]

Beneath this layer of an exchange relationship, however, Matthews saw other forces at work in determining Senate news, primarily institutional ones. He suggested that seniority, committee assignment, size of state represented, ideology, security of Senate seat, as well as senatorial activity were related to a senator's contact with reporters and subsequent news coverage.[29]

Summary of the Co-Investigators' Earlier Work on Senatorial Visibility: The Effect of Institutional Position and Activity on Press Coverage, 1965-1974

Longitudinal content analysis of Senate visibility in major American newspapers, magazines, and television network news for the 89th, 91st, and 93rd Congresses suggests that institutional opportunity structure and the senatorial activity are linked to press visibility in a fairly complex pattern. (See Figure 1 for content data sources.) In the 89th Congress, opportunity

FIGURE ONE ABOUT HERE

structure and activity have an effect primarily through an interaction. Several years later, in the 91st Congress, opportunity structure essentially drops out, with the two measures of activity remaining as influences on visibility. At the height of the Watergate scandal, in the 93rd Congress, opportunity structure emerges as a fairly powerful factor in Senate media coverage. Both activity measures sustain their greater influence on visibility in all three Congresses.

In addition, these specific points emerged from the previous work.

1. Republicans, the minority party throughout the time period studied, declined in news coverage relative to the Democratic majority, even though the number of Republicans in the Senate increased. From relative parity of visibility in the 89th Congress, the G.O.P. dropped by the 93rd Congress to the point that the median Republican senator with 168 press mentions was far behind his Democratic colleague with 304.

2. Overall Senate and intra-party equality of individual press coverage dropped somewhat between the 91st and 93rd Congresses, with the Republicans experiencing significantly greater intra-party inequality than the Democrats.

3. The dramatic shift toward greater inequality of coverage occurred in the 93rd Congress, the period when institutional opportunity structure appeared to be at its strongest as a predictor of visibility. The seniority and committee leadership prestige factors of opportunity structure emerge fairly strongly in this period. The effect of that development is suggested quite vividly in the case of the Republicans. At a time when

they are increasing their numbers (with a greater proportion of freshmen, of course) in the Senate, the resurgence of the institutional factors in the 93rd appears to have been associated with both the loss and greater comparative inequality of press coverage in the 93rd Congress.

4. Activity measures were more consistently predictive of press coverage than was opportunity structure. An interaction effect with opportunity structure in the 89th, clear main effects in the 91st, and strong main effects in the 93rd Congress demonstrate the importance of the activity measures.

5. The patterns of institutional opportunity and activity effects on press coverage appeared to be distinctly different for each party and for each Congress. But the patterns of press coverage were highly similar among the media for each Congress. Network television news, the wire service, major newspapers and magazines all responded in similar patterns to the factors studied here.

In an attempt to provide a wider perspective on press coverage of the Senate, personal interviews were conducted with seven prominent Washington Correspondents.[30] Three Associated Press reporters and two United Press International correspondents working out of the Senate Press Gallery, and two reporters for a large newspaper chain, described Senate coverage and reacted to some of the Senate visibility data. When shown a list of highly visible senators, the reporters explained the results in terms of many of the variables used in the study -- seniority, committee assignment, and activity -- but they added a host of individual differences and personality characteristics.

Presidential aspirations, an understanding of the press, and expertise were often cited.

The same kinds of explanations emerged for low visibility senators, but these senators also evoked a range of other comments: "They don't want to make news;" "They're a bland, faceless lot;" "They're quiet or fearful of the press."

None of the reporters mentioned senatorial staffs in their initial explanations of Senate coverage, but when asked about it, all agreed that staffs were a key factor in reporting the Senate. Phone calls from Senate staffers to reporters in the middle of our interviews -- reminding them of press conferences or providing other information -- seemed to support the reporters' statements. They said staffs were consulted by reporters far more frequently than senators themselves and that the more persons on the staff, the more areas a senator could specialize in.

Much more important than staff size was staff quality, the reporters felt. A strong staff could make the difference in legislative effectiveness and visibility. In addition, they reported that some senators were particularly adept at using committee staffs for personal aggrandizement.

Press releases were in evidence everywhere in the Senate Press Gallery. They were on bulletin boards, the reporters' cluttered desks, and in the hands of some.

All the correspondents agreed that the highly visible senators churned out reams of paper, but they insisted this alone did very little to affect coverage. They saw press release volume as a function of greater activity -- "aggressiveness"

was a frequent term used. Rarely do press releases become news stories in themselves, according to the correspondents, but they were viewed as important for background, as explanations of bills, and as general reference matter. A UPI correspondent noted that a senator's floor activity was likelier to make news if he also issued a supplementary press release about it. A veteran AP reporter said, however, "It's an inevitable fact of life, the way we operate with limited staff. . . that the more speeches, press releases, and other activities a senator turns out, the more coverage we give him."

The reporters found plausible the relationship between state size and visibility. Senators from big states have more "clout" and often have presidential aspirations, they said. One of them noted that big-state senators approach the press differently from the small-state senators. He said big-state senators see the media as key to their reelection; they cannot possibly shake hands with everybody the way the small-state people can.

All the reporters interviewed saw staff quality, committee work, committee chairmanships, and what one of them termed "meaningful activity on issues" as major determinants of media coverage. A young UPI reporter said it was a simple matter of the "doers and the non-doers," adding, "I honestly don't know what some senators do here!"

In summary, this longitudinal study suggests that being high in Senate opportunity structure can, indeed, provide a base from which to attract national media exposure. The predictive power of the institutional factor apparently shifts

from Congress to Congress, though, and the importance of senatorial activity in making the news appears to be greater than the institutional forces.

Only further longitudinal study of previous Congressional decades can begin to provide an answer, but this study suggests that a decentralization of power in the Senate is not strongly reflected in the patterns of mass media coverage during the decade of the 89th to the 93rd Congresses. And, the shift to greater inequality of press coverage, both inter-party and intra-party, in the 93rd Congress suggests that the media may be contributing to what Jones has called the "centrifugal tendencies" of Congressional power.[31]

A Test of the Institutional Position and Activity Hypotheses in the 83rd Congress

Three major institutional-structural factors and several measures of senatorial activity which emerged in our earlier studies are tested on the 83rd Congress, 1953-54. Study of the first Congress of the Eisenhower Administration enables us to observe Senate press coverage during a time when the Republicans enjoyed majority-party status. The focus of the research is on the relative importance of Senate power structure--what we have termed "opportunity structure"--and senatorial activity in determining national press coverage of the Senate.

Opportunity Structure.

Seniority, size of state represented, and committee leadership prestige are combined into a single dimension, institutional opportunity structure.

1) Seniority. Matthews suggested that senior senators had

more frequent contact with national news reporters than their lower seniority colleagues, and our earlier study found some support for a relationship between seniority and visibility.[32]

2) State size. Senators from larger, more urban states appear to be more active in Senate proceedings than their colleagues from smaller states.[33] In addition, some reporters argue that big state senators see the media, even the national press, as an essential link with their large constituencies, especially for reelection purposes.[34] Our earlier study found state size to be an important factor in Senate media visibility.

3) Committee Leadership Prestige. Committee and subcommittee chairmanship and ranking minority memberships are positions of institutional power in the Senate that are openly sought after by all senators.[35] And, some reporters argue that committees are the fulcrum of press contact with Congress.[36] Our earlier studies suggested that number of committee and subcommittee chairmanships was related to media visibility.

In addition, certain committees are more desirable and powerful than others. Political scientists have established several rankings of committee desirability.[37] While some of our earlier studies found no relationship between media visibility and prestige of committee assignment, we reasoned that combining committee desirability with the committee chairmanships variable might increase the power of committee leadership positions as predictors of media visibility.

These factors were combined in this study to produce a measure of institutional opportunity structure for each senator.

It was hypothesized: Senators with a higher institutional opportunity structure are likely to be more visible in the mass media than are their colleagues who are lower in institutional opportunity.

Senate activity. Events and activity are obvious foci in news coverage of the Senate. A great deal of contemporary research suggests that activity may be a far more important predictor of press coverage in the contemporary Senate than are institutional factors. Herbert B. Asher, for example, has found that the norm of apprenticeship has begun to break down in both the House and the Senate, creating an atmosphere supportive of newcomer activity and participation.[38]

Activity in the Senate may be of a wide variety of types, but committee work is generally considered to be most significant in terms of legislative productivity. Polsby suggests actual floor activity, especially introduction of bills, may be more important in the work of the Senate than is generally realized. He says submission of bills which are "going nowhere for the moment," combined with speeches on the floor and Senate hearings, function to make the Senate a "hothouse" for policy innovation.[39]

Other significant work, especially for senators attempting to build a national constituency for a specialized policy area, consists of activity outside the Senate, making speeches and acquiring and giving information in other forms.

This leads to two hypotheses about activity:

[1] Senators who are higher in Senate floor activity -- bills introduced -- are likely to have greater visibility in the mass media than their less active colleagues.

[2] Senators who are higher in general senatorial activity -- speeches on and off the floor, as well as other external activity -- are likely to have greater visibility in the mass media than are their less active colleagues.

Methodology

Predominately natural, unobtrusive data from published documents -- Congressional Quarterly, Congressional Staff Directories, and Congressional Record -- and the national "trunk" wire of the Associated Press are used in this study of the 83rd Congress.

Independent Variables.

Opportunity Structure. Seniority rankings, state population size rankings, number of committee and subcommittee chairmanships [and ranking minority memberships], and committee prestige rankings were obtained from standard documents.[40] The respective scores for each factor were summed, producing an index of institutional opportunity structure.

This procedure was based on the face validity of these measures, rather than on the empirical correlations among them. An examination of the empirical correlations indicates that seniority and committee leadership prestige are highly correlated (.63 and above for each Congress), but these two variables tend to be weakly correlated in a negative fashion with state size. It can be argued, though, that these variables tap

separate dimensions [external and internal] of institutional opportunity structure and therefore need not be correlated with each other to be added together.

Senatorial Activity. Two measures of activity are used, neither of which is presumed to be completely valid. Both, however, are relatively unobtrusive, and they have been used by others as an approximation of a kind of senatorial activity.

Number of bills introduced in each Congress by each senator was obtained from standard documents.[41]

The second measure is number of entries in the Congressional Record for each senator in each Congress. Asher has suggested that the Record can be used as a "sophisticated" measure of some types of legislative activity.[42] Our intent was to attempt a measure that would extend beyond legislative work to outside activity, such as speeches and public activity of various kinds. The Record appears to do that well. We are aware that individual Congressmen do alter the Record and that they sometimes may use it cosmetically. It would appear, however, that manipulation of the Record is a practice that is common, rather than a characteristic of a particular type of senator.

Extensive review of the Congressional Record for a large group of senators from both parties strongly suggests that "irrelevant" entries, such as magazine and newspaper article titles cited but not authored by the senators, are proportional to the total number of entries. That is, a senator with a large number of total Record entries is also likely to have a large number of irrelevant entries. A senator with few Record entries has proportionally few irrelevant entries. Therefore, we decided

to use the total number of entries for each senator as a simple measure of "activity" for this initial research.[43]

Dependent Variable.

Media Visibility. University Microfilm's daily file of the Associated Press national trunk wire--the major source of Senate news for most American daily newspapers--was searched. The names of the U.S. senators were used as coding units, both in the news items coded first-hand and in the major indexes used as secondary sources of visibility data. For each item in which a senator's name appeared, a single score was assigned regardless of multiple references.

Level of measurement approached interval scales for both independent and dependent variables in the study. Multiple regression, path analysis[44] and analysis of variance were used to analyze the data.

Results

As the Korean War armistice talks dragged on at Panmunjom in early 1953, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis.) dominated the news from the 83rd Congress. McCarthy's Government Operations Committee's investigations of the army and U.S. overseas information programs in 1953 and the Senate's move to censure him in 1954 resulted in McCarthy being the most visible senator in the 83rd Congress.

The press visibility patterns for the top ten senators of the 83rd Congress reflected the razor-thin margin held by the Republicans as the majority party, the last time they have organized the Senate in contemporary political history. Five Republicans, four Democrats, and the only Independent in the Senate were among the ten most visible.

William Knowland (R-Calif.), who was elected majority leader in August, 1953, after the death of William Howard Taft (R-Ohio), was the second most visible member. His leadership on the Senate floor concerning President Eisenhower's omnibus farm bill to institute flexible price supports and the Administration's legislation to broaden Social Security coverage gave Knowland high visibility in the AP wire.

A political maverick, Wayne Morse (I-Ore.), who had shed his Republican label in order to campaign for Adlai Stevenson in 1952, received substantial wire service coverage because of his independent status. His role in the successful Senate filibuster against granting states control of natural resources in their seaward "tidelands" and his outspoken criticism of the leadership of both parties earned him the high press coverage.

Among Democrats, Estes Kefauver (D-Tenn.), a key party leader who had been a contender for the presidential nomination in 1952, led the field in press visibility. Close behind were Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.), a highly active Senate liberal who opposed the Eisenhower Administration's attempt to revise the Taft-Hartley labor law, and Senate minority leader Lyndon B. Johnson (D-Tex.). (See Figure 2)

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

As the majority party, Republicans got about 55 percent of the wire service coverage of the Senate during this period. Of the four Congresses looked at in this series of studies, the parity of coverage between the parties is greater for the 83rd Congress than for any of the Democratically-controlled Congresses in the mid-sixties and early seventies. As the minority party in the 1970's, the Republicans slipped to less than one-third of the press coverage, even though their numbers in the Senate were increasing.

In the 83rd Congress, the median Democrat was slightly more visible (41.3 mentions) than his Republican colleague (34.5). In the later Congresses, the typical Democratic senator received about twice as many mentions in the press as a Republican.

Intra-party equality of coverage appears to be dramatically different in the 83rd Congress. As in the other Congresses studied, the majority party members appear to be treated more similarly -- mentioned with more nearly the same frequency -- than minority party members. In the case of the 83rd Congress, the disparity of coverage was much greater for Democrats overall than for Republicans, as illustrated by a kurtosis of 15.4 for Republicans compared to 1.05 for Democrats.

The Hypotheses. Senators who enjoy prominent positions of power through seniority, prestigious committee leadership assignments, and state size -- what we call institutional opportunity structure -- appear to have an advantage in the press over their less powerful colleagues in the 83rd Congress. In fact, the opportunity structure hypothesis has stronger support for the 83rd than for the three later Congresses, even though the 93rd Congress showed a fairly strong resurgence of the factor.

Among the individual opportunity structure variables, the path analyses indicate that state size was the best predictor of AP coverage for both Republican and Democratic senators. (See Figure 3.) This was also true for Republicans, but not Democrats, in the 91st and 93rd Congresses. For Democrats in the three later Congresses (89th, 91st and 93rd), committee leadership prestige was generally the best predictor of media visibility.[45]

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Senate activity -- as measured by the chronicle of activity in th Congressional Record and by the number of bills and resolutions sponsored -- still is a more powerful predictor of press coverage in the 83rd Congress than is opportunity structure, a pattern borne out in all four Congresses studied. (See Tables 1 and 2.) Positions of power in the Senate obviously help pave the way for attention in the press, but it is clear from these data that an active senator with few of the trappings of Senate

power can also command considerable press coverage.

TABLES 1 and 2 ABOUT HERE

Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), a former Congressman, was highly visible in the wire service during his first term in the Senate in spite of his non-prestigious assignments to the District of Columbia and Public Works committees. The son of a farmer and champion of the "little man," Gore made news for his opposition to the Dixon-Yates bill, which would have introduced private electrical power production in competition with the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Although receiving much of their coverage from tough re-election bids, John Sherman Cooper (R-Ky.) and Paul Douglas (D-Ill.) -- both first term senators -- also illustrate the power of events and activity in gaining press visibility. Cooper received coverage for some key floor votes against large Republican majorities. Douglas, an outspoken and highly active liberal with few of the formal trappings of Senate power, gained coverage for his fight against the Eisenhower Administration's attempt to revise the Taft-Hartley law.

In summary, Senate leadership positions, combined with seniority and state size, always command press attention. Being a member of the majority party which organizes the Senate, commanding all the committee chairs, is a publicity advantage. In fact, of the four Congresses studied here, only when the Republicans controlled the Senate for the last time in the 83rd Congress have they been able to command slightly better than parity coverage over the Democrats. But the push and pull of events and individual senators' activity

enable almost any senator who wishes national publicity to obtain it.

Implications. Research on media coverage of four Congresses during the last quarter-century suggests no major changes have occurred in the patterns of frequency of press coverage of the U.S. Senate. The institutional sources of Senate power suggested by Matthews and others have been consistently important in press visibility, but the forces of events and individual senatorial activity are more powerful in predicting press coverage. The "new breed" of publicity-minded senators -- whom Polsby sees as commanding a power base through national constituencies created in part by media coverage -- appears to be no recent phenomenon. They are just as evident -- and perhaps more so -- in the 83rd Congress as in the 93rd.

In addition, this study suggests that the recommendation of the U.S. Commission on the Operation of the Senate--that the Senate attempt to centralize its public communication--would not be very successful in improving the regularity and proportion of press coverage of the Senate. It is doubtful that the Senate leadership can substantially increase its already considerable leverage on press coverage through the development of a central staff devoted to press relations. The lure of individual senatorial activity--with its potential for appealing to traditional news values of conflict and immediacy--is just too great. When the regularity and balance of Senate news improves, it will be the partnership of individual senators and reporters which will do it.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Charles Bosley, "Senate Communications with the Public," in Commission on the Operation of the Senate, Senate Communications with the Public: A Compilation of Papers (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 3. See also William I. Hill, "Congressmen Flunk Reporters on Coverage of 94th Congress," Editor and Publisher (December 18, 1976), p. 9, in which Hill reports that an overwhelming majority of congressmen agree that the press fails to report Congress adequately.

[2]For an excellent discussion of the diffuse, fluctuating citizen support for Congress, see Leroy N. Rieselbach, Congressional Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), pp. 221-224. Rieselbach concludes that public support for Congress is "well within acceptable limits."

[3]Commission on the Operation of the Senate, Toward a Modern Senate: Final Report of the Commission on the Operation of the Senate (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 65-73.

[4]Nelson W. Polsby, Congress and the Presidency (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), pp. 100-101.

[5]Michael J. Robinson, "A Twentieth-Century Medium in a Nineteenth-Century Legislature: The Effects of Television on The American Congress," in Norman J. Ornstein (ed.), Congress in Change: Evolution & Reform (New York, N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1975), p. 254.

[6]Robert O. Blanchard, "A Profile of Congressional Correspondents," in Commission on the Operation of the Senate, Senate Communications with the Public: A Compilation of Papers, p. 73.

[7]Senate Communications with the Public: A Compilation of Papers, p. 73.

[8]Nelson Polsby, "Congress, Publicity and Public Policy," in Robert O. Blanchard (ed.), Congress and the News Media (New York, N.Y.: Hastings House Publishers, 1974), pp. 131-134.

[9]Donald R. Matthews, U.S. Senators and Their World (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960). All page references are for the Vintage Books paperback edition.

[10]Congress and the Presidency, p. 92.

[11]Randall B. Ripley, Power in the Senate (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1969), p. 229.

[12]Congressional Politics, p. 163.

[13]Congress and the Presidency, p. 103.

[14]"A Profile of Congressional Correspondents," p. 64.

[15]Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," Social Forces 33:326-335 (May 1955), and Aleksander Matejko, "Newspaper Staff as a Social System," in Jeremy Tunstall (ed.), Media Sociology (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 168-180.

[16]Stuart Hall, "A World at One with Itself," in Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (eds.), The Manufacture of News (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1973) pp. 85-94.

[17]Edward J. Epstein, "The American Press: Some Truths about Truths," in John C. Merrill (ed.), Ethics and the Press (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1975), pp. 60-68

[18]Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "Accidents, Scandals, and Routine News: Resources for Insurgent Methodology," in Gaye Tuchman (ed.), The TV Establishment: Programming for Power and Profit (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1974), pp. 53-65.

[19]Herbert I. Schiller, The Mind Managers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

[20]"The American Press: Some Truths about Truths," pp. 60-68.

[21]Leon V. Sigel, Reporters and Officials (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1973)

[22]Phillips W. Davison, James Boylan, and Frederick T.C. Yu, Mass Media: Systems and Effects (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976), pp. 71-91.

[23]Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News," in Jeremy Tunstall (ed.), Media Sociology, pp. 259-298.

[24]Blumler, in a study of producers of BBC television election coverage, concluded that outside institutional or political pressures affected the determination of what was important far less than did their own personal criteria. See Jay G. Blumler, "Producers' Attitudes Towards Television Coverage of an Election Campaign: A Case Study," in Jeremy Tunstall (ed.), Media Sociology, pp. 411-438. Elliott, in a similar study of television documentary producers in England, also found that they relied more heavily on their own personal evaluations of content but noted that the producers also depended on outside authoritative sources to define important information for them. For example, in designing a series on prejudice the TV producers utilized newspaper stories as well as associations representing people or causes related to the subject matter to tell them what was important or "true". See Philip Elliott, The Making of a Television Series (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1973).

[25]"A Profile of Congressional Correspondents," p. 71.

[26]Henry Fairlie, "Profit Without Honor," The New Republic (May 7, 1977), pp. 16-18.

[27] Susan Helmann Miller, Congress and the News Media: Coverage, Collaboration and Agenda-Setting (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1976).

[28] U.S. Senators and Their World, p. 214.

[29] U.S. Senators and Their World, p. 215-217.

[30] Interviews conducted by Cleve Wilhoit, with Donald M. Rothberg, Joseph W. Hall, Jr., and Lawrence Knutson of the Associated Press Senate Bureau, and William Vance of the Knight News Service, Washington, D.C., February 26, 1976; and with Saul Friedman, National Press Building, October 21, 1976. Interviews conducted by Cleve Wilhoit and David Weaver with Donald May and Cheryl Arvidson of the United Press International Senate Bureau, Washington, D.C., May 20, 1976.

[31] Charles O. Jones, "Somebody Must Be Trusted: An Essay on Leadership of the U.S. Congress," in Orstein (ed.), Congress in Change: Evolution & Reform, p. 273.

[32] U.S. Senators and Their World, p. 200, and David H. Weaver, G. Cleveland Wilhoit, Sharon Dunwoody, and Paul Hagner, "Senatorial News Coverage: Agenda-Setting for Mass and Elite Media in the U.S.," in Senate Communications with the Public: A Compilation of Papers (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), pp. 45-50.

[33] U.S. Senators and Their World, p. 200.

[34] Interview with Joseph W. Hall, Jr., AP correspondent, in Senate Press Gallery, February 26, 1976.

[35] Norman J. Ornstein, "Seniority and Future Power in Congress," in Congress in Change: Evolution & Reform, pp. 72-83.

[36] Mary Russell, "The Press and the Committee System", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, (Jan. 1974), 411:114-119.

[37] Rieselbach, Congressional Politics, p. 60.

[38] Herbert B. Asher, "The Changing Status of the Freshmen Representative," in Congress in Change: Evolution and Reform, p. 234.

[39] Congress and the Presidency, pp. 99-100.

[40] The term "opportunity structure" was suggested to us by Professor Leroy Rieselbach in a personal communication. Seniority rankings for the 83rd Congress were obtained from the Congressional Directory, 1954, pp. 190-192. Matthews, in U.S. Senators and Their World, pp. 148-159, ranked committee desirability on an ordinal scale. His ranking ranges from "1" (Foreign Relations Committee) to "15" (District of Columbia Committee). Some senators were on several committees and the fluctuations produced by the use of all the committee assignments tended to distort actual prestige rankings. Therefore, each senator's two highest prestige committee assignments were averaged for this

study. The scale used in this study is highly correlated with the composite committee desirability ranking presented in Rieselbach, Congressional Politics, p. 60. (Spearman's Rho = .82)

The number of committees and subcommittees a senator served on as chairman or ranking minority member was obtained from the Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 1954, pp. 18-20; and Congressional Index (New York: Commerce Clearing House, Inc., 1954), pp. 4001-4102.

[41] Number of bills introduced by each senator in the 83rd Congress was obtained from Congressional Record Index, Volume 99--Part 13, January 3, 1953 - August 3, 1953, and Volume 100--Part 13, January 7, 1954 - December 2, 1954.

[42] Asher, "The Changing Status of the Freshman Representative," p. 238, fn. 21.

[43] Two measures of Senate activity were taken from the Congressional Record Index for the 83rd Congress. The first, or total, measure included all citations appearing in the Record under each senator's name. The second measure controlled for Record "padding" by deleting all activity outside the Senate from the total number of citations under each senator's name. (These items included outside addresses, articles, newspaper stories and editorials, and statements entered into the Record.) Thus, this second measure of internal Senate activity included only amendments, bills and joint resolutions, motions and resolutions, petitions and papers, and remarks made by each Senator. The Pearson's r between the total measure of activity and the internal measure was .99, strongly supporting our hypothesis that padding of the Congressional Record is proportional to the number of more substantive entries in the Record for each Senator.

[44] For a general discussion of the theory, usefulness and dangers of causal analysis, see Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., Causal Inferences in Nonexperimental Research (New York: Norton Co., 1964). The following causal assumptions are asserted by the path model for the institutional variables. Recall these are assumptions about the direction of the causation. Questions involving magnitude and sign of effect are not directly related to the validity of these assumptions.

a. The size of the Senator's state influences the Senator's power position in the Senate.

b. Size of state has no causal effect on a Senator's seniority. (This will remain unanalyzed in the model.)

c. As one accumulates more seniority, committee and subcommittee assignments are affected.

d. Size of state will produce differential effects on one's visibility.

e. Seniority will produce differential effects on one's visibility.

f. The number and kind of committee and subcommittee chairmanships a senator holds in the Senate will produce differential effects on one's visibility.

The most important assumption of this model is that the flow of causation is recursive. In addition to standardized regression coefficients (Betas), the unstandardized coefficients were examined when comparing one Congress to another, or when comparing Republican and Democratic senators to each other or to all senators in each Congress.

[45] In the earlier study of the 89th, 91st, and 93rd Congresses, we also included a measure of individual senators' staff sizes, which proved to be the most powerful predictor of media visibility (among the opportunity structure variables) for senators from both parties in the 89th and 91st Congresses. In these Congresses, state size appeared to lead to staff size, which then led to higher media visibility. In the 93rd Congress, state size emerged as the most powerful predictor of media visibility for Republican senators, and committee leadership prestige was the strongest predictor for Democrats. We could not include a measure of staff size for the 83rd Congress because we could not locate a record of individual senators' staff sizes, even with the help of one of the librarians employed by the Library of Congress.

FIGURE 1

Media Visibility Sources for the Four Congresses Studied

83rd Congress (1953-1954)	89th Congress (1965-1966)	91st Congress (1969-1970)	93rd Congress (1973-1974)
Associated Press (National Trunk Wire)	Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature	Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature	Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature
	Random sample of Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report	Associated Press (National Trunk Wire)	Newspaper Index to Washington Post, New Orleans Times-Picayune, Chicago Tribune, and Los Angeles Times
	Random sample of issues from ten Eastern and Western Prestige Newspapers (Chicago Tribune, Des Moines Register, Kansas City Star, Los Angeles Times, Milwaukee Journal, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Washington Post, Christian Science Monitor, New York Times, and the Louisville Courier-Journal)		Television Index to ABC, NBC, and CBS nightly news
	Associated Press (National Trunk Wire)		Associated Press (National Trunk Wire)

FIGURE 2

Number of Appearances of Each Senator

in the Associated Press

for the 83rd Congress (1953-54)

Name	Appearances	Name	Appearances
McCarthy, J. (R-Wis.)	358	Fulbright, J.W. (D-Ark.)	39
Knowland, W. (R-Cal.)	226	Williams, J. (R-Del.)	39
Morse, W. (I-Ore.)	175	Kuchel, T. (R-Cal.)	37
Kefauver, E. (D-Tenn)	126	Magnuson, W. (D-Wash.)	36
Humphrey, H. (D-Minn)	116	Hickenlooper, B. (R-Iowa)	34
Johnson, L. (D-Tex.)	113	Chavez, D. (D-N.M.)	33
Langer, W. (R-N.D.)	113	Hill, L. (D-Ala.)	33
Ferguson, H. (R-Mich.)	108	Barrett, F. (R-Wyo.)	32
Capehart, H. (R-Ind.)	102	Holland, S. (D-Fla.)	32
Anderson, C. (D-N.M.)	98	Long, R. (D-La.)	32
Bricker, J. (R-Ohio)	95	Green, T. (R-R.I.)	31
Douglas, P. (D-Ill.)	95	Potter, C. (R-Mich.)	31
Ives, I. (R-N.Y.)	84	Symington, S. (D-Mo.)	31
Lehman, H. (D-N.Y.)	83	Carlson, F. (R-Kan.)	29
Cooper, J. (R-Ky.)	77	Gillette, G. (D-Iowa)	29
Byrd, H. (D-Va.)	74	Case, F. (R-S.D.)	28
Sparkman, J. (D-Ala.)	71	Kilgore, H. (D-W.Va.)	28
Saltonstall, L. (R-Mass.)	67	Butler, J. (R-Md.)	27
Gore, A. (D-Tenn.)	61	Kennedy, J. (D-Mass.)	27
Hennings, T. Jr. (D-Mo.)	61	Schoeppel, A. (R-Kan.)	27
Smith, H.A. (R-N.J.)	60	Dworshak, H. (R-Idaho)	26
Smith, M. (R-Maine)	60	Flanders, R. (R-Vt.)	26
Aiken, G. (R-Vt.)	59	Frear, J.A. (D-Del.)	25
George, W. (D-Ga.)	58	Goldwater, B. (R-Ariz.)	25
Wiley, A. (R-Wis.)	57	Watkins, A. (R-Utah)	24
Dirksen, E. (R-Ill.)	54	Clements, E. (D-Ky.)	23
Russell, R. (D-Ga.)	54	Hayden, C. (D-Ariz.)	23
Mundt, K. (R-S.D.)	51	Malone, G. (R-Nev.)	22
Millikin, E. (R-Colo.)	50	Daniel, P. (D-Tex.)	21
Murray, J. (D-Mont.)	50	Welker, H. (R-Idaho)	21
Johnston, O. (D-S.C.)	49	Pastore, J. (D-R.I.)	20
Jenner, W. (R-Ind.)	48	Smathers, G. (D-Fla.)	20
Monroney, A.S.M. (D-Okla.)	47	Robertson, A.W. (D-Va.)	18
Cordon, G. (R-Ore.)	46	Thye, E. (R-Minn.)	17
Johnson, E. (D-Colo.)	46	Mansfield, M. (D-Mont.)	15
Hendrickson, R. (R-N.J.)	45	Duff, J. (R-Pa.)	14
Neely, M. (D-W.Va.)	44	Payne, F. (R-Maine)	13
Young, M. (R-N.D.)	44	Purtell, W. (R-Conn.)	13
McClellan, J. (D-Ark.)	43	Bennett, W. (R-Utah)	12
Ellender, A. (D-La.)	42	Bush, P. (R-Conn.)	12
Jackson, H. (D-Wash.)	41	Stennis, J. (D-Miss.)	12
Kerr, R. (D-Okla.)	41	Martin, E. (R-Pa.)	8
Eastland, J. (D-Miss.)	39	Beall, J.G. (R-Md.)	6

FIGURE 3

Path Models for Institutional Opportunity Factors and Senatorial Visibility for 83rd Congress

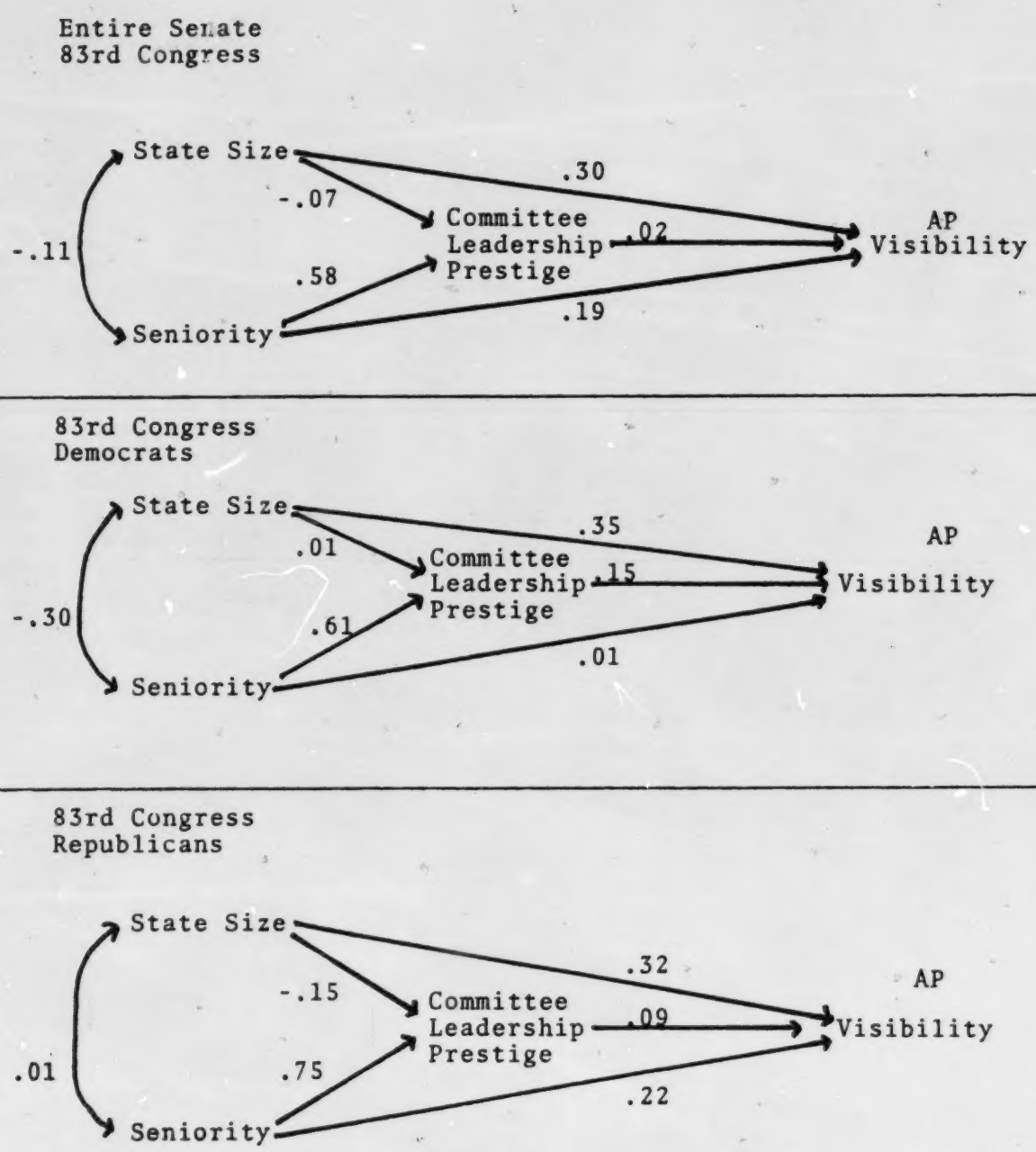

TABLE 1

Mean Press Visibility Scores for Senators in the 83rd Congress, by Institutional Opportunity Structure and Bills Introduced

Opportunity Structure	Bills Introduced: Low	Bills Introduced: High	
Low	31.5 n=17	46.7 n=12	37.8
Moderate	33.7 n=10	53.9 n=16	46.1
High	63.3 n=16	79.2 n=16	71.1
	43.8	60.7	52.3

Main effects F=3.5 p=.02
Opportunity Structure F=2.6 p=.03
Bills Introduced F=3.9 p=.11
2-way interaction F=.02 p=.98

TABLE 2

Mean Press Visibility Scores for Senators in the 83rd Congress, by Institutional Opportunity Structure and Activity Cited in Congressional Record

Opportunity Structure	Record Activity: Low	Record Activity: High	
Low	27.8 n=18	54.1 n=11	37.8
Moderate	35.9 n=14	58 n=12	46.1
High	45 n=11	85 n=20	71.1
	34.9	69.7	52.3

Main effects F=5.6 p=.001
Opportunity Structure F=2.3 p=.104
Record Activity F=8.5 p=.005
2-way interaction F=2.9 p=.75